

Phil Brease, 1950-2010

Phil Brease died May 12, 2010, in the field, sharing his knowledge of park geology with students. Teaching was a role he loved, whether the students were youngsters on a field trip or colleagues in the NPS.

Phil started his career as a professional musician, but was quickly sidetracked by his love of geology. He graduated from Central Washington University and worked for multiple agencies before coming to Denali in 1986 to work on mining evaluation. Phil's work with mining in the park transitioned over time from the

contentious job of evaluating mining plans and claims, to the significant challenges of restoring mined lands. Phil excelled at developing cooperative research relationships and throughout his career facilitated research with a wide network of educators, geologists, and paleontologists.

Phil's contributions to park geology and paleontology were many. His efforts to improve understanding of park geology and his fostering of the park's newly recognized paleontological resources were especially important. His exceptional wit and excitement was

infectious as he communicated colorful geologic stories to countless and diverse audiences.

Phil exemplified the goals of this publication: developing science in the parks and communicating that science to a broad range of the public. Phil's name will live on in the minds of many researchers, park staff, visitors and school children, as well as in the Devonian *brachiopod* named in Phil's honor, the *Myriospirifer breasei*.

Meg Hahr, 1967-2009

Meg Hahr and her husband, Sidney Shaw, left Alaska in March 2009 when Meg accepted the Chief of Science and Natural Resources position at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan. She loved her work and had a bright future ahead of her with the National Park Service. Meg died suddenly on June 21, 2009, after a mountain bike accident near her new home.

Meg started her NPS career studying lynx, fisher and wolverine in Glacier National Park during the late 1990s. While there, she completed her Master's degree with the University of Montana. In 2002, Meg arrived in Alaska as the Natural Resource Program Manager at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Skagway.

She molded the park's fledgling Natural Resources program, inviting others to share her enthusiasm for the unique natural resources of the park. In the Taiya River Valley, in the heart of historic Dyea, staff are treated to her most visible accomplishment – each

summer a muddy pond, trampled by horses, transforms into a beautiful field of irises surrounding a small clear running stream. The Nelson Slough restoration showcased the park's mission of resource protection in a way that many projects could not.

She also began a process that led to the inventorying of the park's lichen community and the discovery of several hundred never before identified species. One new species was named *Coccotrema hahriae* in her honor. Less visible was her influence on seasonal staff whom she mentored with great care, and her coaching of the founders of Taiya Inlet Watershed Council who recently restored Pullen Pond and Creek. She was well-loved in the small community of Skagway.

Meg transferred to Kenai Fjords National Park as the park's Ecologist in 2006. She was instrumental in the backcountry campsite monitoring project reported in this issue. Meg cared deeply about the park's resources

and worked tirelessly to understand and protect them. She conducted seabird colony counts, coordinated bear management activities and worked with the Southwest Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Program marine nearshore sampling program. She worked hard, but also had fun at her job. Her dedication, love of the park and quiet sense of humor made working with her a pleasure.

Meg was an intelligent, energetic, and articulate advocate for natural resources. At Kenai Fjords her legacy continues. We will be conducting new projects on peregrine falcons and additional seabird research in the next few years as a result of Meg's vision and excellent proposal writing skills.

She will always be remembered for her unfailing kindness, her generosity of spirit, and her genuine humbleness. With Meg's untimely death at 41 years old, the National Park Service lost a rising star, and she is deeply missed.

The Rewards and Risks of Working in Alaska's National Parks

By Robert Winfree

As we were working to prepare this issue of Alaska Park Science, the NPS science and resources community received sad news that several close friends and colleagues had passed away. Meg Hahr and Phil Brease were active participants in two studies published in this issue. Four others, Mason McLeod, brothers Neal and Seth Spradlin, and pilot Marco Alletto were lost in a tragic accident when their plane went down while returning from fieldwork in Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Losing a close friend and coworker is hard, regardless of the cause. The shock of learning that it occurred unexpectedly through a severe accident or other medical emergency compounds our sense of loss. For those of us who share a love of the natural world, and who value a sense of adventure and self-reliance, the time we spend in parks often feels like our dream come true.

Our love of the outdoors may seem reason enough to spend time in parks, but we have learned from experience that successful fieldwork results from preparation. We train for our job; plan for severe weather, wildlife hazards and challenging travel; and try to anticipate other contingencies. We carry emergency gear and extra supplies, but teamwork and good judgment are the most important tools we bring to difficult situations.

Sometimes, after successfully working through a difficult situation, we realize that luck was with us. Other times however, our own resources may not be enough, and we have to seek help from others. These situations give each of us cause to reflect on the time we spend in remote and hard-to-reach locations, where help is often far away. Have we done everything we can to ensure that we, and the people around us, are prepared to deal with unexpected contingencies? What else can we do before our next trip to ensure

that it will be our best and not our worst trip ever?

Our work in national parks is important to us and to others, but nothing we do in the national parks is as important as ensuring that everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.



Phil Brease, 1950-2010



Meg Hahr, 1967-2009



NPS Photograph



NPS Photograph



Alaska Geographic Photograph



NPS photograph by Shelley Hall



NPS photograph by Christina Kriedeman